

# Batik



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# Batik



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## Creating a Batik

A batik is not a painting on a piece of material; it is a pattern or picture dyed into a piece of cloth. The method consists in preparing certain parts of the material so that they will not take the dye.

The basic tone of the material (usually silk or linen) is white, or a pastel colour. Certain areas of the material are covered with hot liquid wax using a *tjanting* (batiking tube) or a brush; the wax permeates and seals the parts it covers so that the dye cannot penetrate. The material is then dipped into a dye bath—the first colour being the lightest tone of those to be used. Next, those areas which are to retain the colour just dyed are covered with wax, and the material is dipped into a dye of a colour darker in tone than the first. This process continues until the darkest shade (black) has been reached. Since the colours are superimposed in the dyeing process, a particular colour-scale must be adhered to. For example, if the first dye is red and the second blue, keep in mind that the end result is not blue but violet.

After the last dyeing, the material is dried and placed between two layers of absorbent paper (such as old newsprint). The wax is ironed out of the material and into the paper. When all the wax has been ironed out, the batik reveals the pattern or picture that has been permanently dyed into the cloth. This is always an exciting moment, for one can never be sure of having achieved a perfect separation of the colours—a good result depends on this.

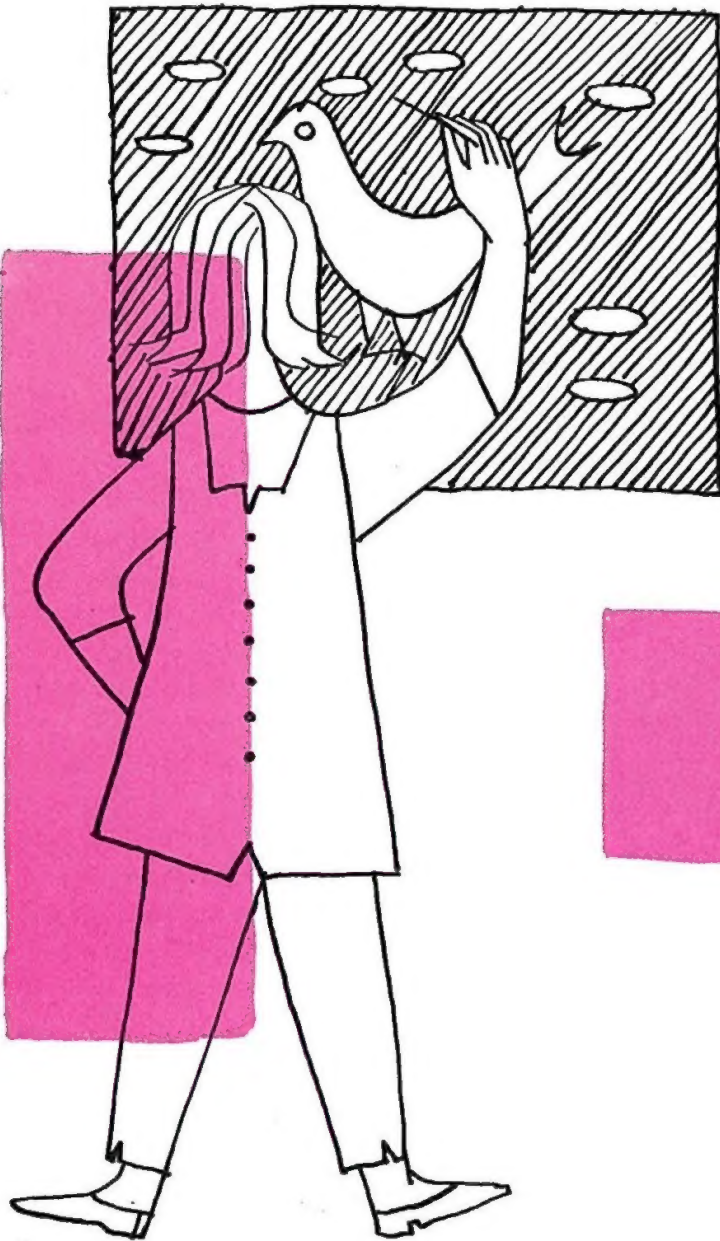
Characteristic of this process are the cracks or breaks in the design. Congealed wax is hard and brittle; thus it happens that during the dyeing or rinsing of the material, the wax cracks and the dye penetrates these places. This results in the fine spiderweb pattern which lends batik its peculiar charm, giving it a life of its own.

This very old technique originated in Indonesia; the island of Java still produces exquisite materials and wall hangings decorated by this process, richly ornamented, and very often of the highest artistic merit.



**Wall Hanging**  
**"Cock on a Steeple"**

Material: white linen.  
Colours: violet and black.  
Size: 20" × 32"



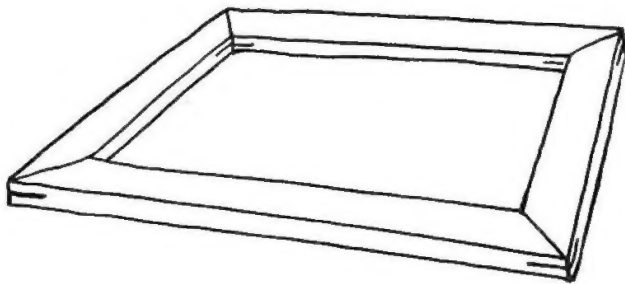
## What is Batik?

### Preliminary Sketch (Choice of Motif)

Make a preliminary sketch to start with. Begin with simple motifs, such as patterns consisting of lines, dots, squares, circles, flowers, trees, animals, houses. In this booklet a great variety of motifs are illustrated, from the simplest to the more complex. The best way is to make a charcoal sketch on paper. Mistakes can be rectified easily by erasing with a soft cloth. Suppose we do a tapestry, such as "the dove". The size will depend on the size of the frame on which we mount our piece of material. We can also scale the frame to fit the material; in any case, the preliminary sketch must be of the same size as the project. We must now decide upon a colour scheme.

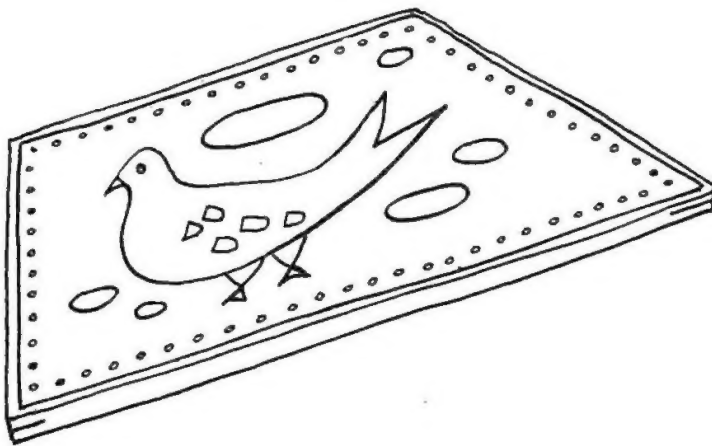
For "the dove", we choose three colours, pink, blue, and black. The material receiving the batik is white.





### **Stretching the Material on the Frame and transferring the Sketch to the Material**

When we have finished our sketch, we prepare the frame on which we stretch the material. We can use an old picture frame, or a canvas stretcher which can be obtained in any art materials store. The advantage of this last is that it can be easily fitted together and taken apart, or its size altered. Stretch the material to be batiked on the frame, using thumb tacks. Take care that the material is smoothly and evenly stretched: it must lie taut while the wax is being applied or it will stick to the working surface.



The choice of a particular material depends on the use the batik is destined for. For example: for shawls, head scarves, blouse material—in short, for articles of fashion—we use pure silk, or Japanese raw silk, and sometimes fine cotton. For tapestries, table-cloths, banners and so on, we choose fine-textured Japanese raw silk, fine linen, batiste, cotton, or grasscloth.

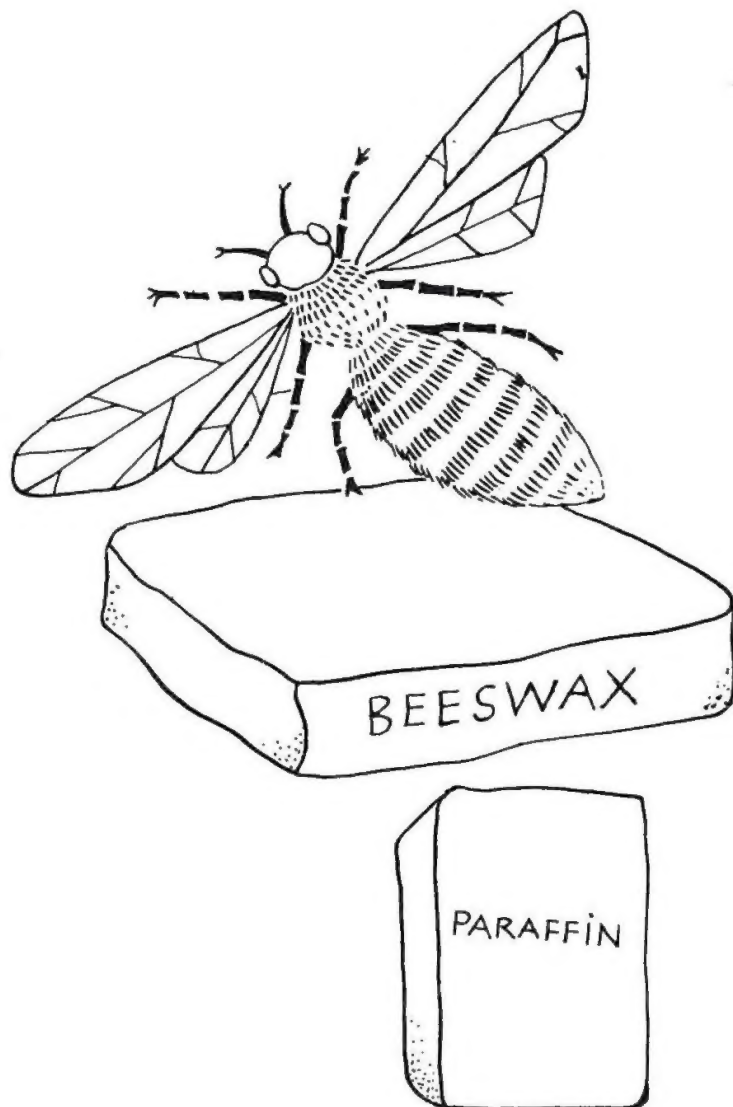
It is very important that materials are not dyed, that is, they must be white or natural. Materials that have been finished or glazed must first of all be washed in soap and water or in a soda-solution. Finished or dressed material will not take dyes at all well. Now that we have our chosen material on the frame we proceed with the transference of the design. This can be done in various ways: take a piece of transparent paper, place

The material is stretched on an old picture frame, or on a canvas stretcher, with the help of thumb tacks. The design is either traced onto the material or sketched on direct.

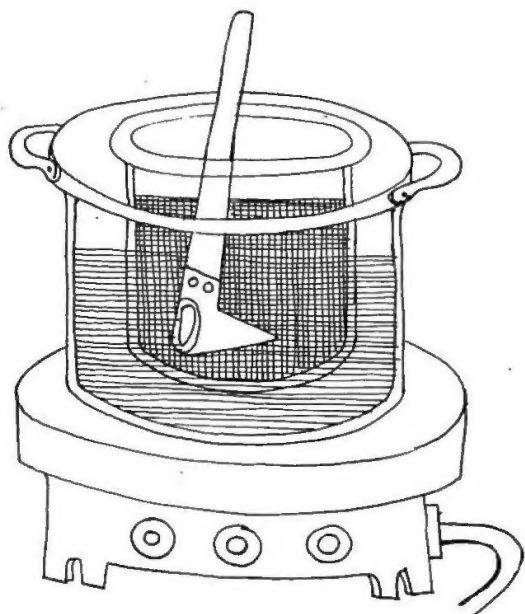
it over the sketch and trace the design with India ink. Now pin or tape the traced pattern underneath the framed piece of material and place this on a sheet of glass which may be smaller (but of course not larger) than the frame. When this is lit up with a lamp, the design can be clearly seen through the material. Now we can easily trace onto the fabric with a soft pencil (see inside front cover, top left). Since these lines will disappear after repeated dyebaths, especially if we have used charcoal for sketching, it is a good idea to block out all the traced lines with the tjanting at the time of the first wax application.

This manner of transference is employed only in the case of closely woven or thick fabric. To trace designs onto transparent, thin fabrics, we simply place the design on a light-coloured surface with the material on top, and trace the design as described above.

We can also sketch the design directly onto the material using pencil or charcoal. This is the quickest method for anyone who has had a little experience in drawing.



Three parts wax to one part paraffin is the right solution for batik work.



This drawing shows the hotplate and the two containers—one for the water and inside it another one for the wax. The tjanting (batiking tube) is shown in the wax pot.

### Applying the Wax

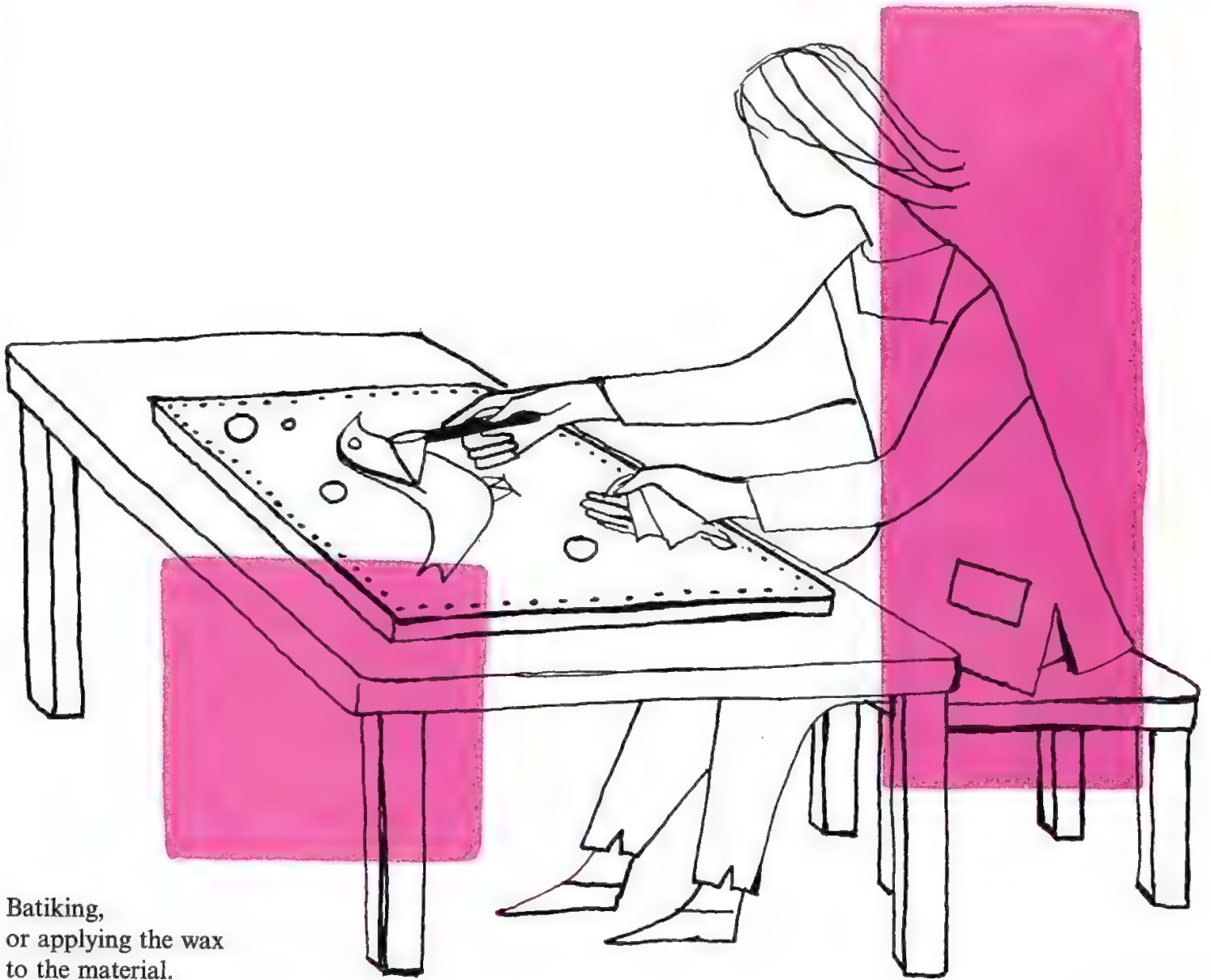
We are now ready to begin the batik. To melt the wax, we need a hotplate, a pot that fits well on it (for the water) and a smaller pot (preferably copper) with a handle, in which to melt the wax. (A set of pots for such purposes, made of copper, is commercially available.) Zinc pots should *not* be used for melting wax, but enamel pots are fine.

Now melt beeswax in combination with paraffin (three parts wax to one part paraffin); the water must be kept boiling softly, even while the work of application goes on. Now dip the tjanting into the hot wax, scoop up a small amount, and block out the outlines of the design, in this case “the dove”, that is, those parts which are to remain white. (In this case, use a flat, rather wide brush to apply the wax.) If the wax has not penetrated everywhere, turn the frame over and apply wax where necessary. Mistakes made at this stage cannot be corrected, for it is impossible to remove the wax so that the dye will take. In case of errors it is best to start again.

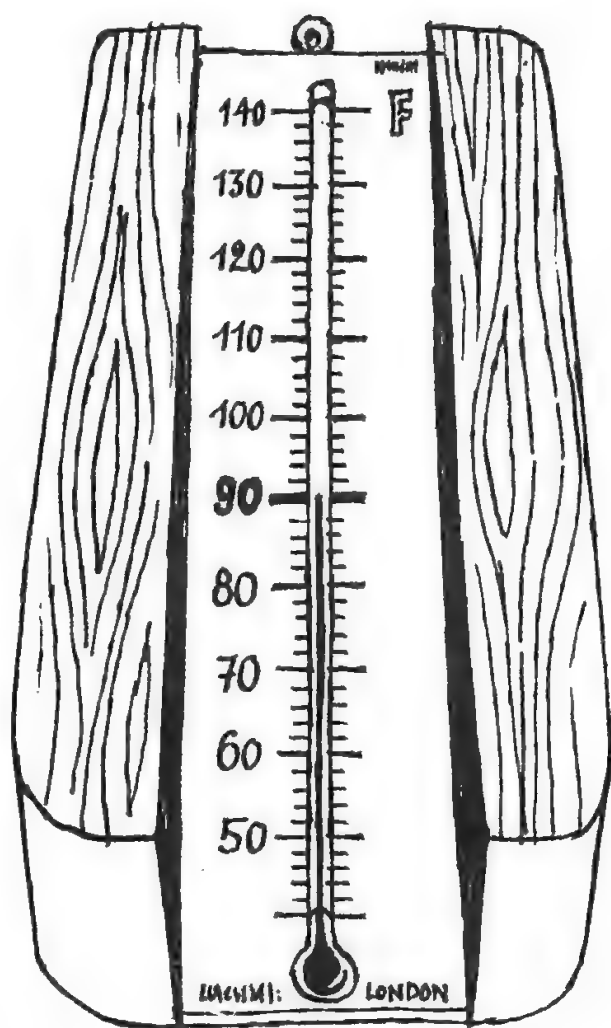
Tjantings can be had in different sizes to produce thin or thick lines. When blocking out, be sure not to take too much wax at a time (the wax hardens very fast). Prevent unwanted dripping by holding a piece of cloth under the tjanting when bringing it over the material. It is important, then, to apply the wax as speedily as possible, and as soon as it begins to harden return the tjanting to the pot and wait until it heats up again, and so on.



Three types of tjanting.



Batiking,  
or applying the wax  
to the material.



## Dyeing

When we have blocked out the part of the design that is to remain white, we begin with the dyeing. For our design, we begin with pink. As has been said, the dyeing process always proceeds step by step from the lightest to the darkest colour. Use textile inks available in arts and craft stores, or ordinary fabric dyes. For lighter or darker tones, use more or less water. Prepare the dye in plastic or enamel bowl, large enough to permit the batik to be submerged easily and moved about. Use warm water, up to 90° F. (32° C.) but no hotter, or the wax will melt. Dissolve packet of dye in a small enamel container in about half a pint of boiling water and pour it into the warm water through a piece of used linen cloth. This prevents undissolved particles of dye from entering the solution. Now mix the solution well. We are now ready to dye. Take the batik from the frame, dip it into plain water first, then into the dye. For the dipping, use two wooden sticks; or better, wear rubber gloves. Recently many cold fast dyes have been developed which are, of course, more practical and which are usually widely available. If not, you will have to use the traditional methods of dyeing.

Dyeing takes from five to twenty minutes, or until the desired shade (in this case, of pink) is reached. Bear in mind that the wet fabric shows stronger colouring than the dry. We can get a fair idea of the shade by removing the batik from the dyebath and holding it up to a window or a light. When the desired shade is

reached, remove the batik from the dye and rinse it in cold water—do not wring. It is this rinsing that causes the cracks characteristic of batik. The wax cracks and thus admits dye during subsequent colouring; these places can be blocked out with wax again, but not before the last colouring.

Now let the batik drip dry, and stretch it on the frame once more. When it is completely dry, we block out again, this time all the areas that are to retain the pink colour, that is, as can be seen on the inside front cover of this booklet, top right and bottom left. Now we prepare the blue dye; all areas that have not been blocked out will now take on this colour. Leave the batik in the dye long enough so that the pink is completely covered, i.e. until a deep shade of blue is reached.

### Method of Removing Colour

If, for example, we had dyed a deep red instead of pink, and then wished to use also a strong blue or green, we would first have to use a colour remover; for blue on red produces purple. In this case we would have to treat the batik in a bath of colour-remover. This would remove the red colour from all areas not treated with wax. After this process, rinse the batik well. Now the blue could be dyed.

Dipping the batik  
into the dye.



Waxed areas that are put through several dyebaths should be recoated where they appear too thin between the dyeing. In the case of thick fabrics (such as linen), coat the back of the material as well to make sure of good coverage.

After the first wax-blocking, we can also apply any colour we choose with a brush, without dipping the batik into a dye (see front and back covers). We must, however, use a concentrated colour-solution, not the ordinary solution for the dyebath. This is recommended for small areas of colour that have already been blocked out. Also, this method can only be used where the batik will not have to be washed; through the application of such concentrated colour the material becomes saturated and may bleed when washed. This method, then, can only be used in the case of wall-hangings or banners which will not be washed later. Once we have applied concentrated dye with a brush we block out the areas with wax and continue the dyeing process as described above.

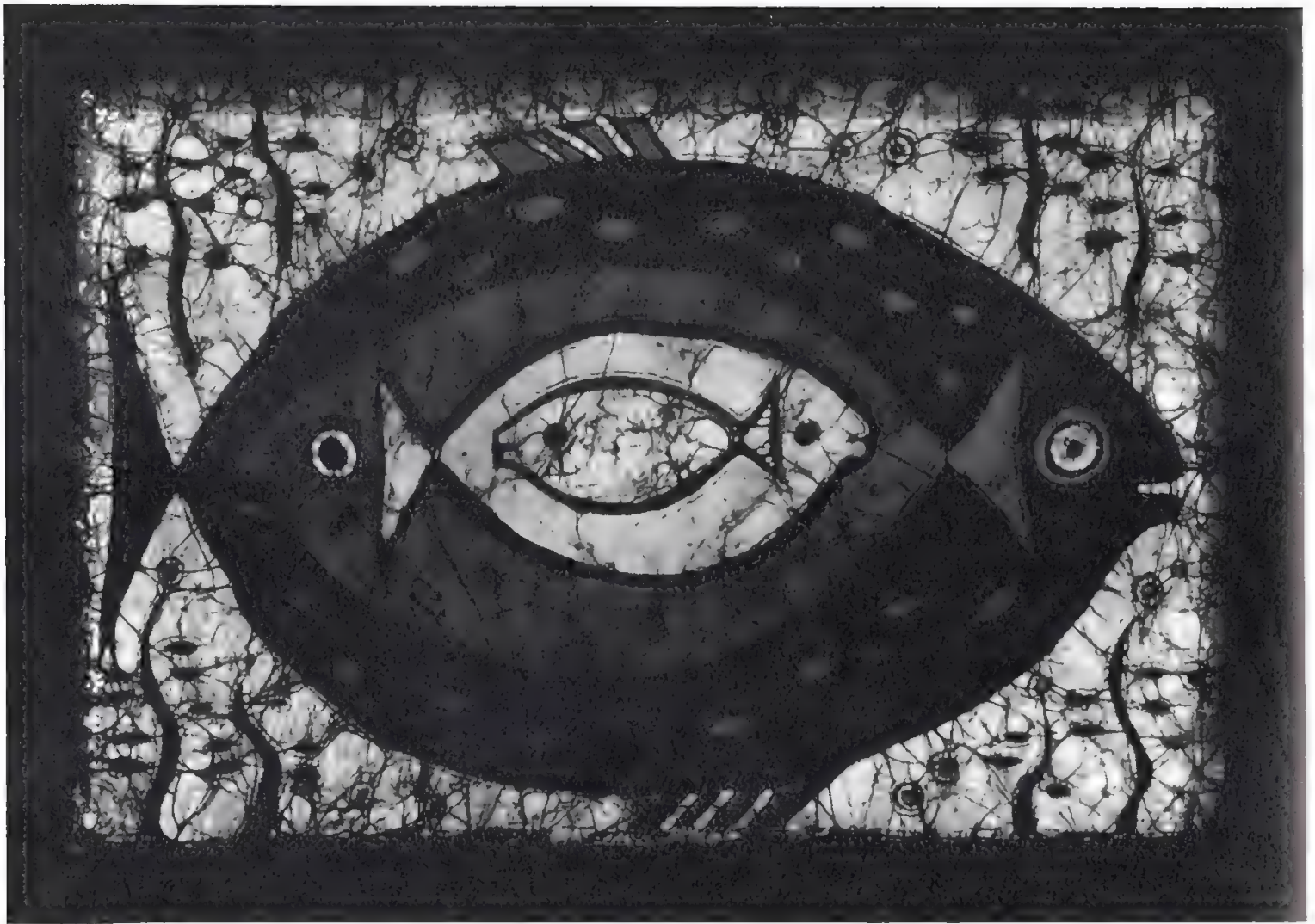
After blocking out all areas that are to retain the blue colour on our batik, we are ready to dye the last and darkest shade we are using—black. In the course of the foregoing dyebaths and rinsings many cracks and thin areas will have appeared. Some of these places should now be re-waxed, to prevent too much of the next colour from coming through. All remaining areas not blocked out now receive the darkest shade in our colour-scheme—black.

### **Removing the Wax**

After the last dyeing, the batik is well rinsed and dried. Now we remove the wax by ironing the batik between sheets of old newsprint or blotting paper. Keep changing the sheets until all the wax has been absorbed. Do not use new newspapers; the fresh printer's ink would transfer to the material, and could not be completely removed again. It is also possible to remove the wax with hot water. The last remaining traces of wax are removed with cleaning fluid. This should be done outdoors, if possible, for the fluid is very inflammable. The batik may be squeezed out gently in the cleaning fluid, then hung up to dry. Save the fluid for future use—the wax sinks to the bottom. Use a (plastic) gallon container with a good seal to store the fluid. Our batik is now finished (see inside front cover, lower right).

Ironing the wax  
out of the material.

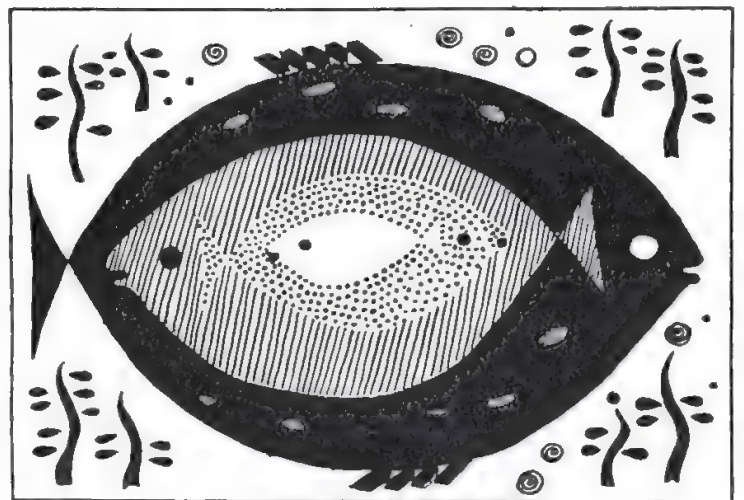
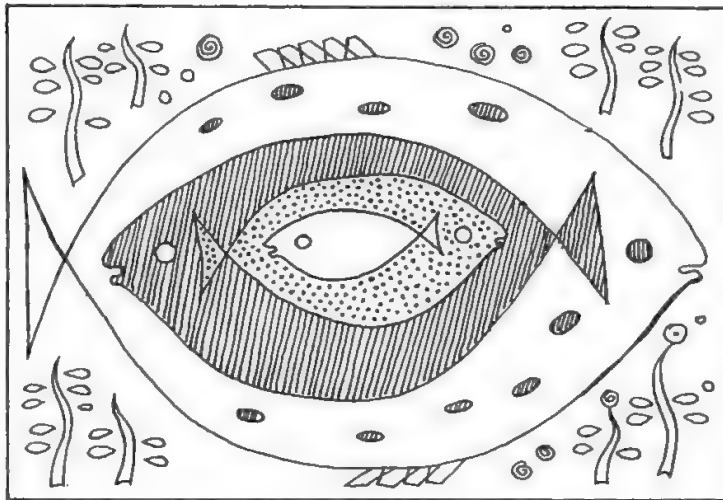
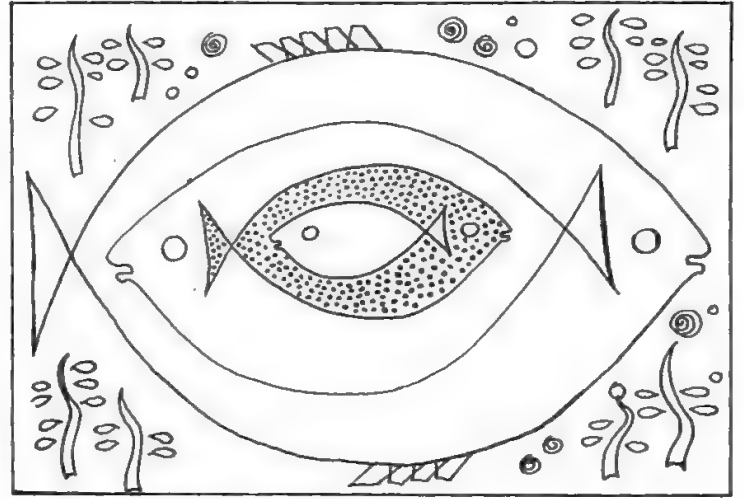
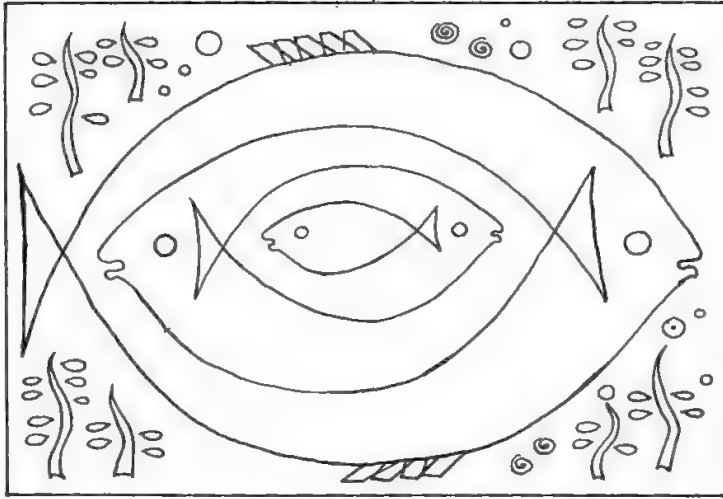




**Wall Hanging: "Fish within Fish"**

Material: batiste (16" × 26").

The fabric is white. In this case the white areas were thinly blocked out, and after the first dyeing (pink) and the second dyeing (pale blue) the wax was re-applied to the white areas. This results in the delicate pink and blue tones in the white. The pink must be dyed lightly so that it is covered by the blue which follows; if the pink is too dark, the blue turns violet.



#### Step-by-step procedure:

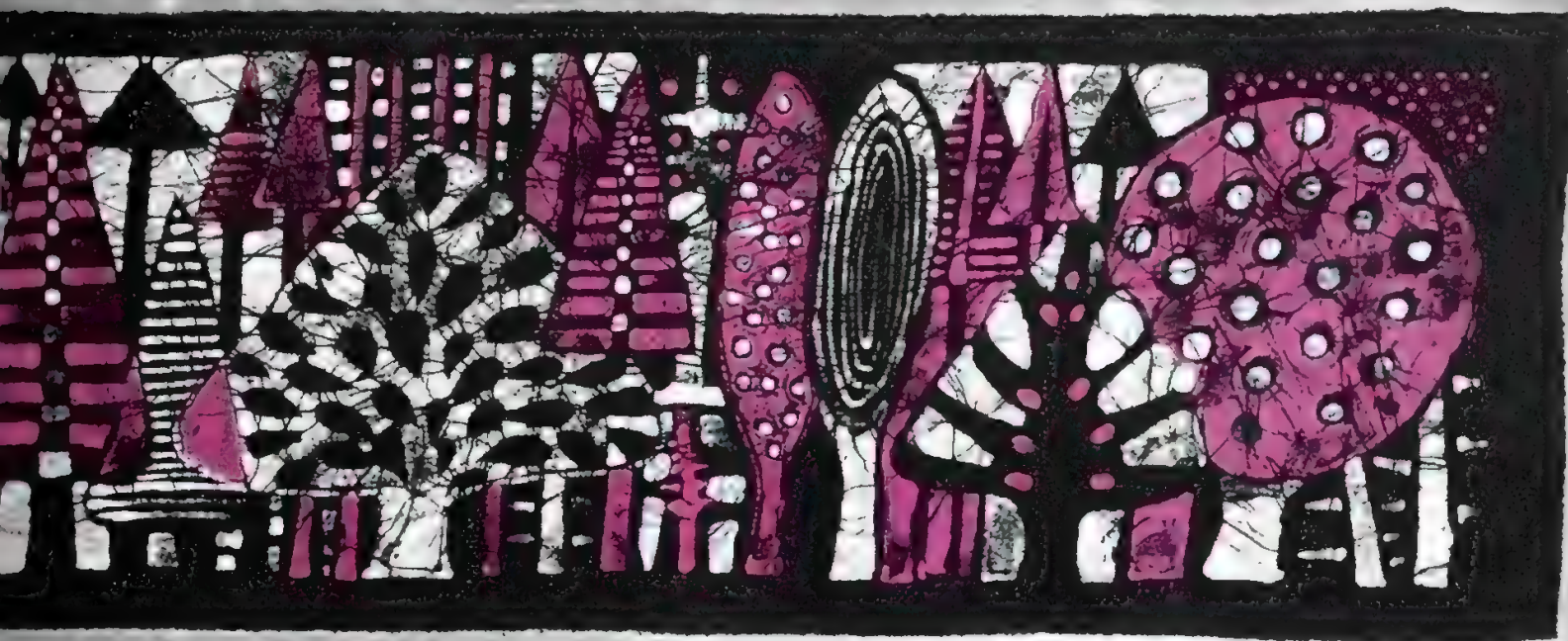
1. sketch on material,
2. white blocked out, pink dyed, blocked out,
3. blue dyed, blocked out,
4. last dyeing, black.



**Wall Hanging: "Edge of the Forest"**

Material: Japanese raw silk (8" × 48").

The colour of the material is ivory; the dyed colours are pink and black. Blocking out was done solely with the tjanting, which resulted in a particularly striking effect in the structure of the individual areas and breaks. This method is usable only if small areas are being blocked out. It is also much more time-consuming than working with the brush.



**Wall Hanging: "Child on a Pony"**

Material: white linen.

Colours dyed are light blue and black. All the other colours, i.e. ruby red, light brown, and cornflower blue were applied (mixed in various concentrations) with a brush before the first (light blue) dyeing and blocked out upon drying. Make sure that the areas painted in with the brush are surrounded by thin lines free of wax, so that the colour which has slightly diffused around the edges of the design will be covered up during the last dyeing (black).

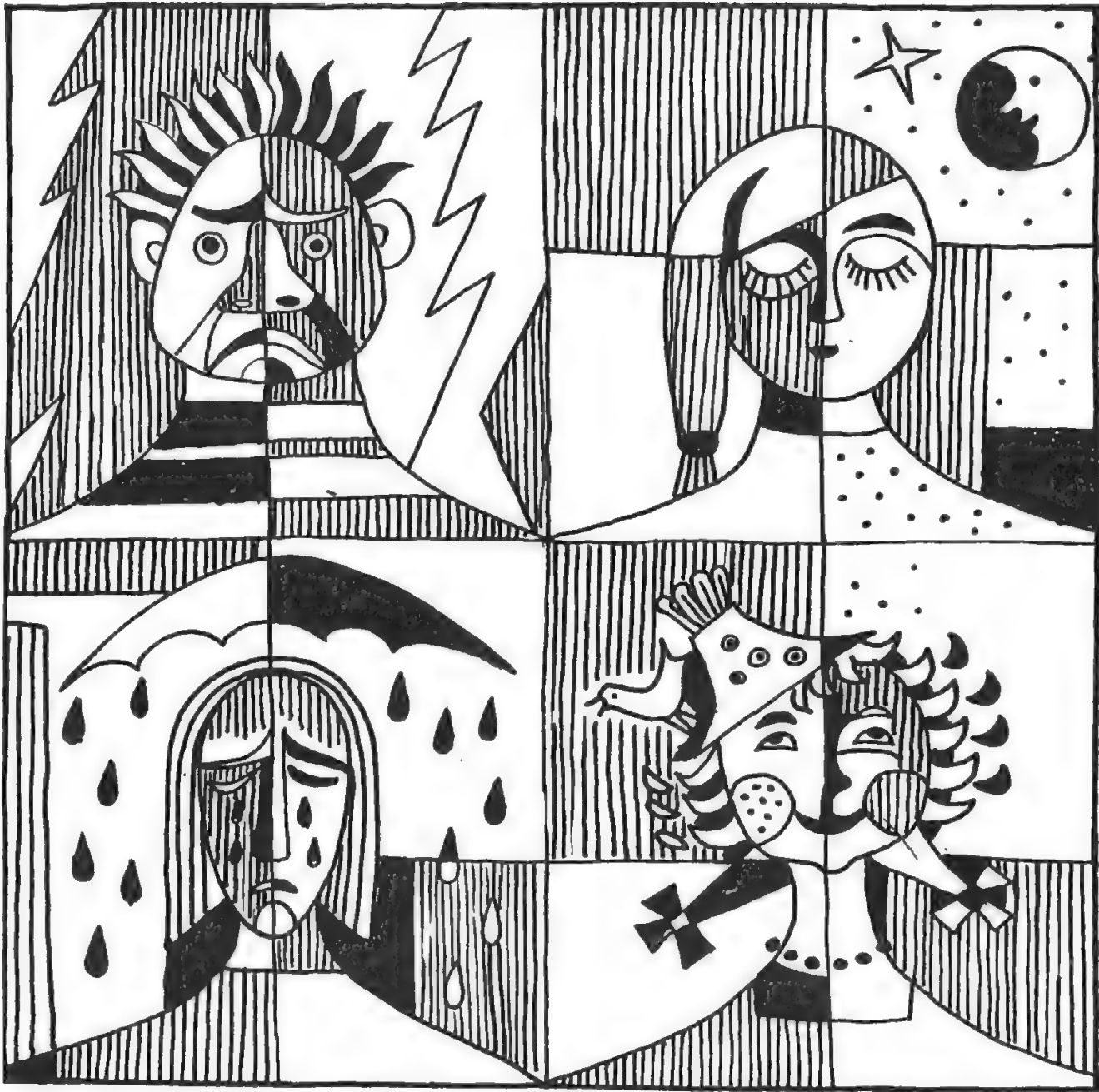
*(Front cover)*

**Wall Hanging: "The Parade"**

Material: white linen.

Dyed with light brown, light pink, scarlet red, and black. The light blue, aquamarine blue, and violet were applied with a brush before the first dyeing (pink) and blocked out along with basic colour (white). Proceed as above.

*(Back cover)*



**Wall Hanging: "The Four Humours"**  
 Material: white batiste (32" × 32").

In this batik, the basic areas of white were very lightly blocked out; as a result much black penetrated the thinly coated areas and breaks. The colours dyed were dark green and black.





### **A Batiked Stole**

Dyed with antique pink, grey-blue, and black. Material: white silk (32" × 72"). The design was drawn freehand directly on the material.

### **Wall Hanging: "Jazz Instruments"**

Material: white batiste (20" × 20"). Colours dyed are pink and black. The drawing was sketched on paper and transferred (see pages 6–7).





**Wall Hanging: "Birds in Flight"**

Material: white batiste (18" × 28"). Colours: light blue and black.

**Wall Hanging: "Sunflower"**

Material: white silk (32" × 32"). Colours: red-orange and black.





**Wall Hanging for Children's Room**

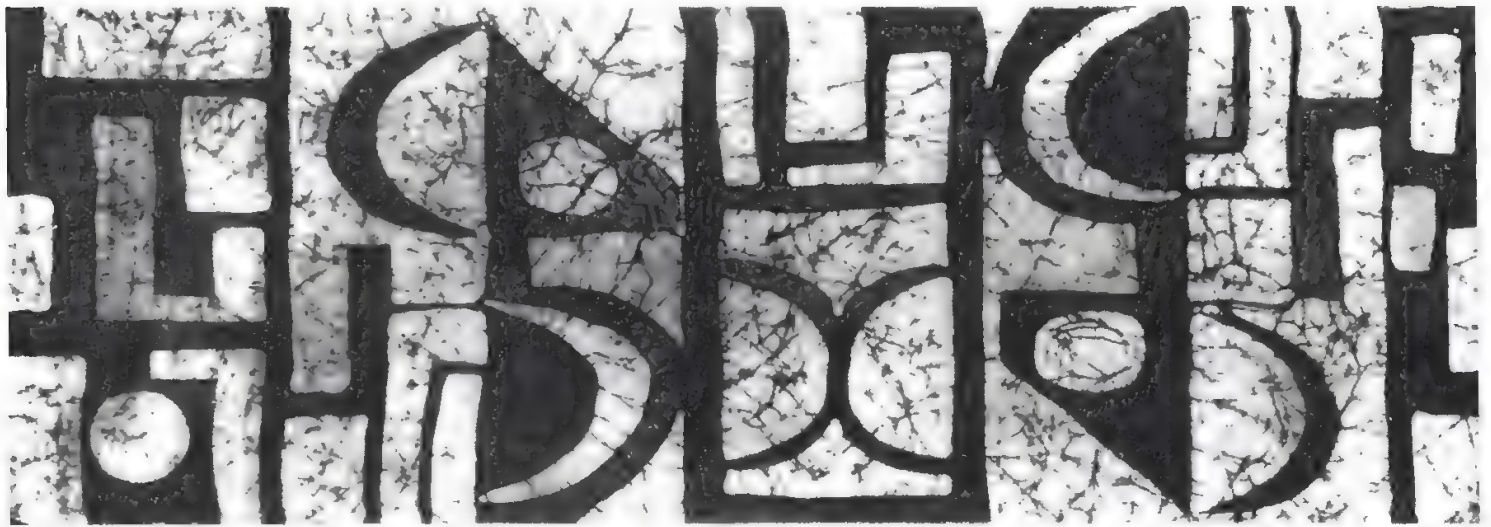
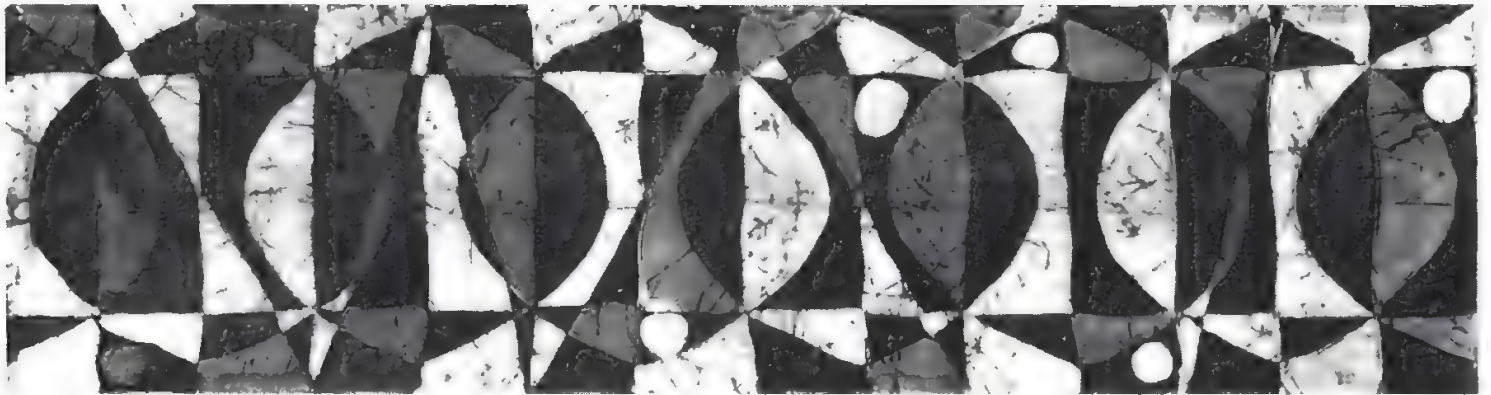
Material: white linen (20" × 24"). Colours dyed were yellow, light brown, and black. The finished batik was embroidered in small areas with gold thread.



### Table Cover (White Material)

Two colours were used here, first red, then emerald green. The two colours combine to produce a dark blue. The design was created from interlocking circles, traced onto the material with the help of a circle cut from cardboard. The white areas were first blocked out using a bristle brush; after the first dyeing, the red areas were blocked out.





### **Shawl in White Silk**

Dyed with red and blue. The pattern was made by means of a bobbin-shaped piece of cardboard; the outlines were traced onto the material in an overlapping fashion. The points of intersection were connected with vertical and horizontal lines. The areas thus created were broken up by different colours.

### **Stamped Batik or Tjap-print**

The wax can also be applied with a stamp, as in potato-printing. Stamps can be fashioned from wood or bamboo sticks. The material is stretched on the frame as usual, the stamp is dipped into the liquid wax, applied to the material and immediately removed again. To prevent dripping, hold a piece of cloth or cardboard under the stamp. After each printing the stamp must be dipped into the wax anew. The pattern is created by the juxtaposition of these stamped designs. If we should wish to dye in two colours we must leave enough room during the first printing to allow for a second one, after the first dyeing.

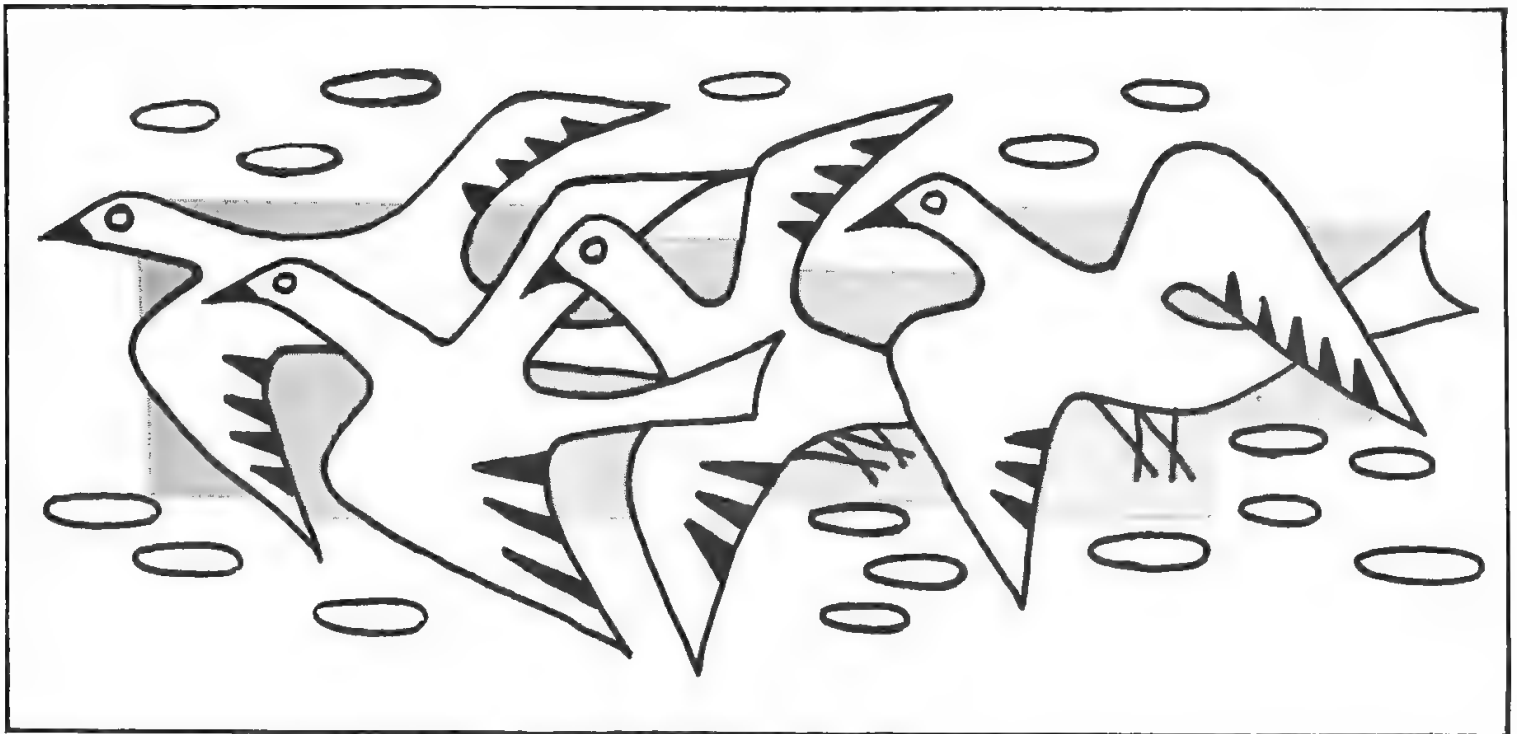
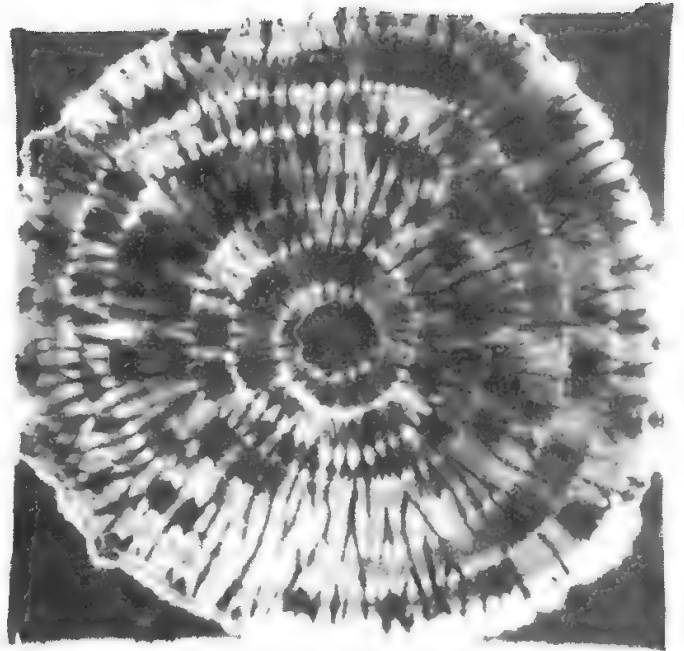
### **Shawl, dyed only once**

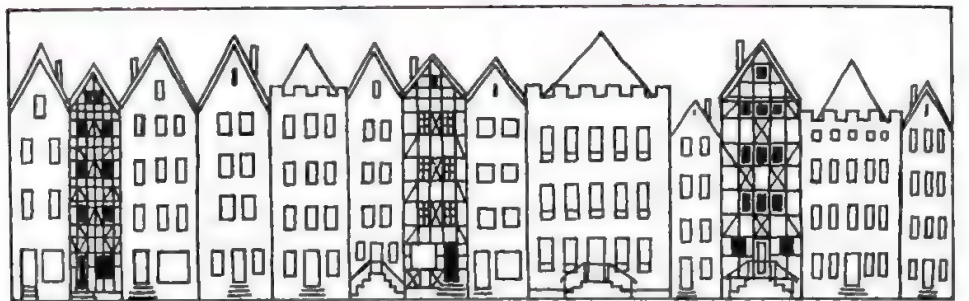
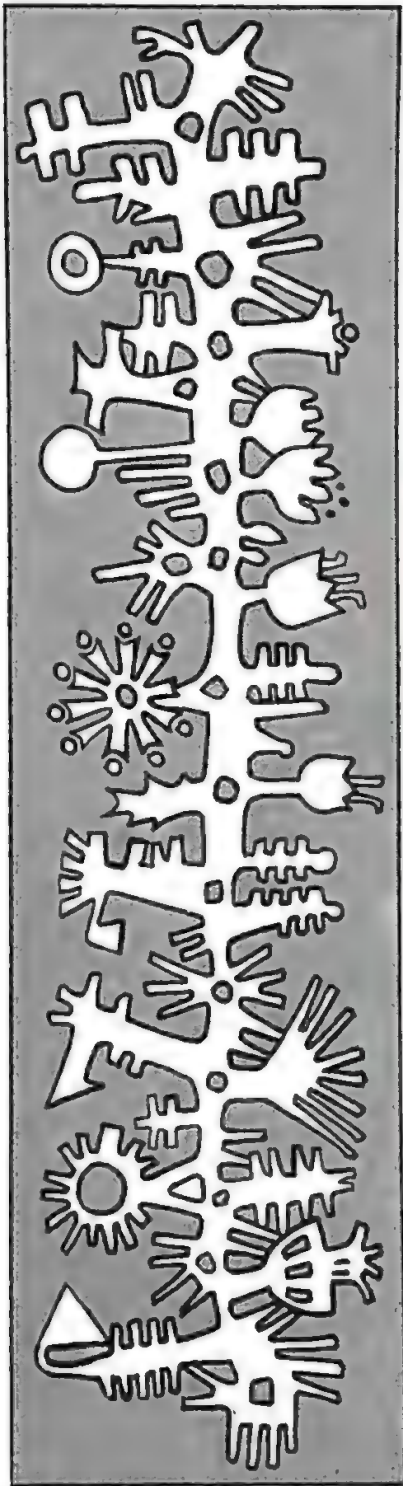
Grey on ivory-coloured silk. Design composed of free forms, repeated. The wax was applied with a brush.

### Tritik Technique

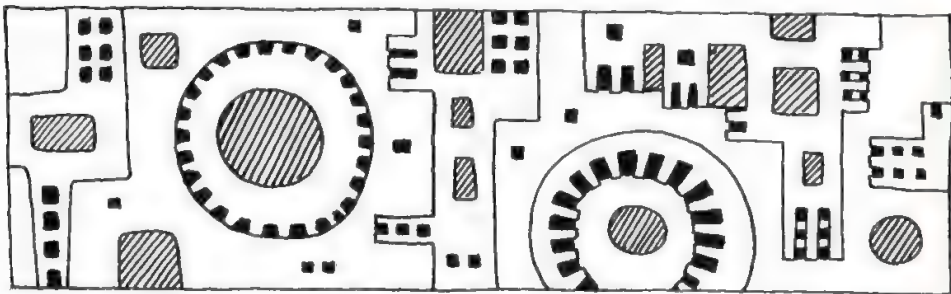
This method stems from Java and means, basically, “sowing, folding, knotting”. Materials needed are cloth, needle, thread, twine, and colours.

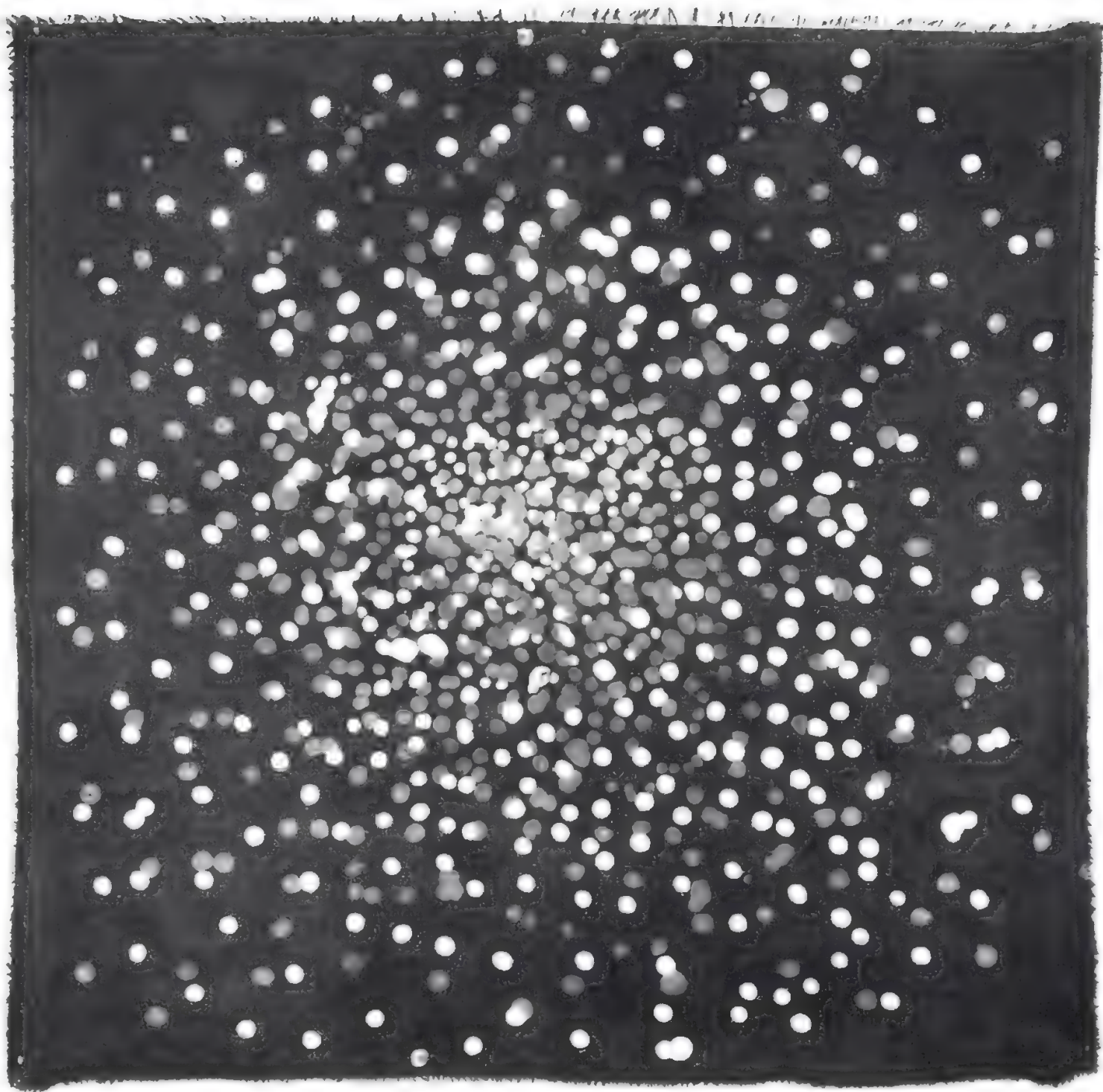
From the middle of the piece of cloth, gather up a spiral, using needle and strong thread. Pull the thread tight, and wind the gathered piece of cloth with the remaining thread and then with a length of waxed twine. Now place the roll of cloth into the dyebath, afterwards dipping the two ends briefly into another colour. Remove twine and thread, dry and iron the finished piece.





Design Suggestions for Batik





## **Drip Batik**

The batik at the left is done on white, dyed first yellow, then blue. The finished product is white-yellow-green. For this very simple technique we need only a candle, a frame, thumb tacks and two colours of dye. Stretch the material on the frame, drip wax from a burning candle (start in the middle) in tight circles, proceeding towards the edges of the fabric, making circles wider and wider. Remove the cloth from frame and dip for a few minutes into the lighter (here yellow) of the two dyes. Rinse in vinegar solution, and let dry. When the batik is completely dry, repeat the process, drip wax in between first drops. Then dye the darker colour (in this case, blue). Areas with no wax will come out green. Iron the wax out of the batik between sheets of (old) newspapers or tissue paper.

Original edition "Buntes Batik-Büchlein"  
by Tony Bachem-Heinen  
Christophorus-Verlag Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau  
© 1969 Herder KG

This edition prepared by Christian Albrecht  
© 1969 Search Press

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Photos by Paul Bachem, pp. 20, 24

Drawings by Paul Bachem  
Made and printed in Great Britain by  
Colour Reproductions Ltd, Billericay  
First published 1969  
Fifth impression 1975 (90th thousand)

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